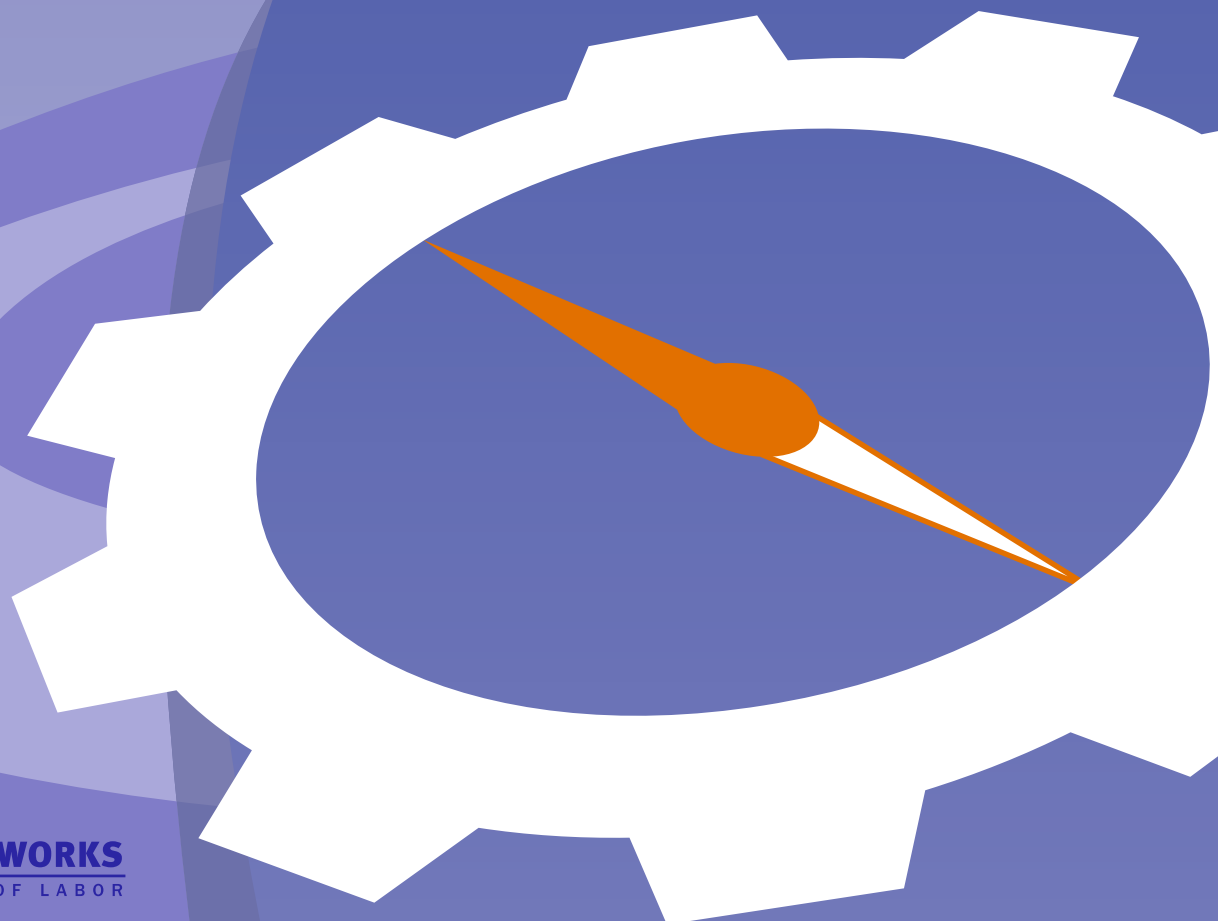


Louisiana  
**CAREERCOMPASS**

2003/2004



**LOUISIANA WORKS**  
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

[www.LAWORKS.net](http://www.LAWORKS.net)

# **LOUISIANA CAREER COMPASS**



Kathleen Babineaux Blanco  
Governor

John Warner Smith, Secretary  
Louisiana Department of Labor

Raj Jindal, Assistant Secretary of Labor  
Office of Occupational Information Services

Michael "Dino" DeMarte, Director  
Research and Statistics Division

1001 North 23<sup>rd</sup> Street  
P.O. Box 94094  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804-9094  
(225) 342-3141, (888) 306-7662

*Visit our Web site at [www.LAWORKS.net](http://www.LAWORKS.net)*

## **2003 – 2004 EDITION**

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## MISSION

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The Department of Labor is a state agency utilizing state, federal, and private resources to provide the training, employment, assistance, and regulatory services necessary to increase employment and promote workplace safety and expanded employment opportunities in the state of Louisiana in a climate favorable to business, workers, and jobseekers.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**LOUISIANA WORKS**  
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

**Kathleen Babineaux Blanco**  
Governor

**John Warner Smith**  
Secretary

**OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**

Dear Reader:

We are very pleased to offer the 2003-2004 edition of *Career Compass*. This publication is geared toward students as well as career changers, and it offers resources for people at almost any stage of their career. Each section provides a variety of tools, samples, and practical tips for successfully navigating the job market.

This year, the *Career Compass* is part of a new suite of products offered by the Department of Labor. Besides *Career Compass*, we now offer *Louisiana Career Paths*, which contains wage, education, and training information on over 200 occupations in Louisiana. We are also pleased to offer eight regional brochures which highlight the "hot jobs" in all eight regions of the state. We hope that these new products will help Louisiana students and workers make informed career choices.

For your convenience, Career Compass is also available to download from our Web site at [www.LAWORKS.NET/forms/er/FindRightJob.pdf](http://www.LAWORKS.NET/forms/er/FindRightJob.pdf). We welcome your comments and suggestions on the Career Compass, and invite you to complete the brief customer feedback survey on the last page of this book.

Sincerely,

John Warner Smith  
Secretary of Labor

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# FOREWORD

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**T**his year, the Louisiana Department of Labor is proud to introduce a brand new suite of career products for students and career explorers. Our new **Career Gear** set includes the 2003-2004 edition of our popular *Career Compass*, along with the very first edition of *Louisiana Career Paths*—a comprehensive, student-friendly book with wage and educational information on over 200 occupations in Louisiana. Career Gear also includes a set of **eight brochures** highlighting hot jobs in each of the eight regions of Louisiana.

Whether you're deciding on a career that's right for you, searching for information on occupations in Louisiana, or starting to apply for specific jobs, we hope you'll find the Career Compass helpful. Finding the right job requires some skill—you have to know what to look for and where to look. This can be tricky for new or even experienced career explorers. This book guides you through the process, from making an informed career choice to succeeding in the career you choose. In the 2003-2004 edition of Career Compass, you'll find:

- Resources for getting started, such as a self-appraisal questionnaire and references for interest assessment tools on the Internet.
- Tips for landing your dream job, including guidelines for writing cover letters and résumés.
- Hints to help you successfully enter the job market and the workplace, including information on workers' rights and responsibilities.

Be sure to check out the additional resources included in various sections. If you have questions or comments about this publication, please contact the Louisiana Department of Labor, Office of Occupational Information Services at (225) 342-3141 or toll-free at (888) 302-7662 – or fill out the survey included at the beginning of this book.

Good luck in your search!

# GETTING STARTED: *What do I want to do with my life?*

Deciding on a career path can be a little overwhelming at first. When you begin to think about your options, there's a lot to consider. What would you like to do? What are you looking for in a job? If you make a career decision now, will you be stuck in the same job for the rest of your life? Because there are so many things to think about, getting started is often the hardest part. Don't get discouraged! Finding the right job can be challenging, but it can also be rewarding and fun.

**1. KNOW YOURSELF.** Before you start thinking about the jobs that are out there, you should back up and think about yourself first. You can't really get a handle on where the "good" jobs are until you have a sense of the sort of job that would be good for *you*. Take some time to assess your skills and abilities, your likes and dislikes. In other words, know yourself. What do you enjoy doing? What sort of a personality do you have? What are your special talents and abilities? It's good to think about the things that other people tell you you're good at, but you should also consider the things you would do even if no one praised you for doing them. Remember, finding the right job begins with discovering what's right for you, not what others might think is right for you!

Get started by taking an interest assessment test or a self-appraisal questionnaire. There are many different types of these tests and questionnaires out there, but they are all designed to get you thinking about

**Take some time to  
assess your skills and  
abilities, your likes and  
dislikes.**

**In other words,  
know yourself.**

your skills and abilities. Many are available on the Internet and in career exploration books that you can find at the library or a bookstore. To get you started, complete the self-appraisal questionnaire that's included on the next page. Try to keep an open mind while you're answering the questions. Remember, this is

just for you, so be honest. Keep in mind that this self-appraisal questionnaire is only one way to begin exploring your likes and dislikes. You shouldn't stop there. Check out the other interest assessment resources listed on page 5.

# GETTING STARTED: *What do I want to do with my life?*

## Self-Appraisal Questionnaire

1. List the school subjects in which you have done well. Did you enjoy these subjects?
2. Name three or four activities that you've found enjoyable.
3. List any jobs you have held. Which job did you like the best? Why?
4. What are you good at? What do you learn easily, without much help from others?
5. What sort of work environment do you think you would like? (For example: Would you rather work inside or outside; do you prefer "dressing up" or wearing casual clothes?)
6. List 15 words that describe your personality. (For example, are you quiet? talkative? organized? creative?)
7. If you could learn any new skill, what would it be? Why?
8. List physical conditions that could help/hurt you on the job.
9. Name three characteristics of a job that are very important to you.
10. List four jobs that you would like (even if you don't know much about them). What is it about each of these jobs that appeals to you?



# GETTING STARTED: *What do I want to do with my life?*

## 2. KNOW WHAT YOU WANT

**IN A JOB.** There are almost as many different types of jobs as there are different types of people. Besides figuring out what *you* have to offer to an employer, you should also think about what you'd like your work to offer *you*. What sort of work setting would you enjoy most? Do you value opportunities for promotion and raises, or are you interested in finding a personal, nurturing environment? Would you prefer working indoors or outdoors?

To get a sense of the things that are important to you in a job, complete the exercise on the right. Not only will this help you think about your priorities, but it should also help you realize that there is probably no "perfect" job out there. Every job has advantages and disadvantages—finding the right job is a matter of deciding what disadvantages you can live with.

### What do I want in a job?

Rank each job characteristic from 1 to 12, with 1 being the **most important** and 12 being the **least important** to you.

- \_\_\_ Good salary and benefits
- \_\_\_ Job security
- \_\_\_ Flexible hours
- \_\_\_ Opportunities to learn new things
- \_\_\_ Sticking to a routine that's comfortable for me
- \_\_\_ Working for an organization whose values are consistent with mine
- \_\_\_ Opportunities to travel
- \_\_\_ Opportunities to be outside
- \_\_\_ Being able to work in teams with other people
- \_\_\_ Having a job with very little stress
- \_\_\_ Working under deadlines
- \_\_\_ Working in a nurturing, supportive environment

# GETTING STARTED: *What do I want to do with my life?*

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**3. ASK FOR HELP.** Remember, there's more than one way to begin a career. Some people decide on a field that interests them, get the training and education they need, and then find a job. Others explore different jobs, or gain experience through volunteer work or internships before settling on one. You should try to collect stories from different people, like friends, family, teachers, or counselors. Make a list of people you know who might be able to help. To get you started, here are some questions you can ask people on your list:

- How did you decide what you wanted to do?
- If you could have any job, what would it be?
- How did you find the job you currently have? Did you plan for it, or did it just happen?
- What would you change about your job if you could?
- Based on your own experience, what advice would you give to someone who is planning a career?

Listen carefully! If you ask five different people, you'll probably get five different stories about how they went about finding a career—and how their current job fits into their overall career objectives.

**4. KEEP AN OPEN MIND.** Just because a self-appraisal or interest assessment test says you are cut out for a certain job doesn't mean that it's the only job for you. No decision you make right now has to be completely final. You'll learn more about yourself—what you like, what you're good at, and what you want from a job—once you find a job and start working. It's okay to change your mind. In fact, the U.S. Department of Labor estimates that the average person who is in high school right now will have about 14 different jobs throughout his or her lifetime! The important thing is just to get started thinking about your future now.

# GETTING STARTED: *What do I want to do with my life?*

## 5. CHECK OUT THESE OTHER INTEREST ASSESSMENT RESOURCES

### Louisiana's Virtual One-Stop

<http://LAVOS/LAWORKS.net>

The virtual one-stop offers a variety of career resources, including an interest assessment tool that allows you to match your skills to different careers. After you choose which skills apply to you, the site will generate a list of occupations that require those skills. The virtual one-stop also provides information about current job openings in Louisiana.

### The Career Key

[www.ncsu.edu/careerkey](http://www.ncsu.edu/careerkey)

This free Web site allows you to take an interest assessment test with a large number of questions. The results help you learn about your personality, and help you to understand the type of careers that might be right for you.

### ISEEK

**(Internet System for Education and Employment Knowledge)**

[www.iseek.org](http://www.iseek.org)

ISEEK provides lots of resources for both students and career changers. ISEEK's interest assessment tool allows you to match your interests, skills, abilities, personality and values to different careers. All services from ISEEK are free, and this site also provides links to lots of other interest assessment resources on the Web. (This Web site was developed in Minnesota, but it has plenty of great stuff for people in other states, too!)

## BOOKS

*What Color is Your Parachute? 2003 Edition* by Richard Nelson Bolles.

*I Could Do Anything If Only I Knew What it Was: How to Discover what You Really Want and How to Get it*, by Barbara Sher and Barbara Smith.

*Dare to Change Your Job and Your Life* by Carole Kanchier, Ph.D.

### Holland Interest Inventory

[www.self-directed-search.com](http://www.self-directed-search.com)

This is a very popular interest assessment tool based on the idea that people fall into one or more of six personality types: realistic, artistic, enterprising, investigative, social, and conventional. Taking the test is free, but it costs about \$10 to get your results.

### The Birkman Career Style Summary

[www.review.com/career/](http://www.review.com/career/)  
(Click on "Career Quiz")

This Web site offers you a 24-question interest assessment test. It's free, but you do have to register if you want to take the quiz. After taking the quiz, you'll receive a description of your interests and a list of possible careers that match those interests. You can click on each career to get more information.

## FACT FINDING: *Where can I find information on careers?*

Now that you have an idea of the things you like to do, and you've started to think about the type of job you might enjoy, the next step is to start looking for information about specific careers. It's smart to find out as much as you can before you make a decision about which occupation is right for you. But where should you begin? Career information is everywhere; you just have to know where to look.

### Career Information on the Internet

Career and occupational information is now widely available and fairly easy to find on the Internet. If you have access, this may be a good place to start. Of course, like any source of information, the Internet has some advantages and disadvantages that you should be aware of.

#### PROS and CONS of finding career information on the Internet

PRO	CON
Information is likely to be up-to-date and "cutting edge," particularly in fields that are growing or changing.	Information may be difficult to find unless you know exactly where to look. Things are constantly changing on the Internet, so your favorite Web site could quickly be moved or re-organized.
A lot of information on the Internet is available free of charge.	Not all information on the Internet is reviewed carefully. It's up to you to make sure that the information you're using is accurate.
The Internet allows you to browse anonymously on different sites; you are free to access whatever information is available.	The Internet gives very little one-on-one guidance for understanding and using the information that's available—it's up to you to read, understand, and absorb the information.

# FACT FINDING: *Where can I find information on careers?*

## RESOURCES *online*

### **LOIS (Louisiana Occupational Information System)**

[www.LAWORKS.net](http://www.LAWORKS.net)

(Click on “Labor Market Info/LOIS”.)

Developed by the Louisiana Department of Labor (LDOL), and housed on the LDOL Web site, LOIS offers tons of information on occupations in Louisiana. Here you’ll find statistics on wages and the employment outlooks in over 500 occupations. You can also research education and training programs that correspond to most occupations. You can even find information on employers all over the state! This Web site provides information on employment, unemployment, wages, and more—both for the state as a whole and smaller local areas in the state. Use the easy pull-down menus to navigate.

### **Louisiana’s Virtual One-Stop**

<http://LAVOS.LAWORKS.net>

This Web site is a one-stop shop for information on Louisiana careers. It complements **Career Compass** by offering more on-line resources for finding the right job in Louisiana. The virtual one-stop features skills assessment tools, helps you to match your skills to occupations, and provides information on current job openings in the state. Not only does this site help you hunt for jobs that match your skills, but it also provides resources to help you get the job you want—including job hunting tips and a résumé builder.

### **Occupational Outlook Handbook**

[www.bls.gov/oco/](http://www.bls.gov/oco/)

The Occupational Outlook Handbook is a great source of information for any career explorer. This publication is available on-line, and you can also find it at bookstores, libraries, or workforce development centers. It contains a wealth of information on over 500 occupations nationally. For each occupation, you’ll be able to learn about the nature of the work, the educational and skill requirements, pay and advancement opportunities, and long-term job outlook.

### **Workers.gov**

[www.workers.gov](http://www.workers.gov)

This Web site offers some great tools to help you navigate the Internet as you’re searching for career information and hunting for jobs. If you’re not very familiar with the Web, or if you’re just not sure where to go, this Web site is a good place to start.

### **Career Adviser**

[www.careeradviser.com](http://www.careeradviser.com)

This Web site offers not only detailed information about dozens of occupations, but it also provides links to professional associations, career-specific job banks, and company home pages. While this site does not cover as many occupations as some of the others, it offers a lot of information about the occupations it does cover.

## FACT FINDING: *Where can I find information on careers?*



### **AMERICA'S** *career onestop*

Whether you're digging for information on many different occupations, looking to discover which jobs best match your skills, or hunting for a specific job, America's Career OneStop can help. Created and maintained by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, America's Career Kit is a set of Web sites, each offering a different service. All services are free of charge.

- **America's Job Bank** ([www.ajb.org](http://www.ajb.org)) allows job seekers to search for job openings in any occupation in any area of the country. You can search for a job by broad occupational groupings, or by keywords, and you can view jobs by educational and license requirements. It's also possible to post your résumé on-line, so that employers can seek you out.
- **America's Career InfoNet** ([www.acinet.org](http://www.acinet.org)) is especially helpful for people who are seeking out information on lots of different occupations. This site contains information on employment trends, wages, skill and educational requirements, and other career information on over 500 occupations. You can find out which occupations are the largest, the smallest, the fastest-growing, or highest-paying in your area.
- **America's Service Locator** ([www.servicelocator.org](http://www.servicelocator.org)) helps people at all stages of their job search, whether they're just beginning to search for a career or looking to change jobs. This site helps you find specific services in your area, including job search and placement services, unemployment services, relocation services, and more.

For more information on any of these services, you can visit the Web sites listed above, or call the Toll-Free Helpline at 1-877-US2-JOBS. (For TTY, call 1-877-889-5627.)



## Career Information in Books

If you don't have access to the Internet, or even if you do, you may also want to consider finding books on the careers that interest you. Like the Internet, books can be a great source of specific information. The next page contains a list of books that may help you get started.

### PROS and CONS of finding career information in books

PRO	CON
Books are usually carefully researched, so you can be pretty sure that the information you're reading is accurate.	Books can become out-of-date very quickly. This is especially true of books about careers in fields that are growing or changing quickly, such as the Information Technology (IT) industry.
New books often contain additional resources, like worksheets or supplements, that are helpful, convenient, and easy to use.	New books cost money. Of course, you can find books at the library, but beware of using old, out-of-date books to find career information. Remember, the world of work is constantly changing!
Books are written with a specific audience—you—in mind. They're usually clearly organized, easy to follow and understand.	It's unlikely that any single book will answer all of your questions. While you may find one book that you particularly like, it's always good to draw on several sources of career information.

# FACT FINDING: *Where can I find information on careers?*

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## **BOOKS** *on careers*

***Occupational Outlook Handbook 2002-03 Edition***, U.S. Department of Labor, 2001.

***Enhanced Occupational Outlook Handbook***, by J. Michael Farr et. al., 2000.

***The American Almanac of Jobs and Salaries, 2000 - 2001 Edition***, by John W. Wright, 2000.

***America's Top Jobs for College Graduates: Detailed Information on 127 Major Jobs for People with Four-Year and Higher Degrees***, by Michael J. Farr, 2002.

***One Hundred Best Careers for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***, by Shelly Field, 2000.

***Career Guide to America's Top Industries: Essential Data on Job Opportunities in 42 Industries***, U.S. Department of Labor, 2002.

***The Career Guide for Creative and Unconventional People***, by Carol Eikleberry and Richard Nelson Bolles, 1999.

***Your Bright Future in Information Technology***, by Gene Corwin and Henry Lifton, 2002.

***Becoming a Graphic Designer: A Guide to Careers in Design (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)***, by Steven Heller and Teresa Fernandes, 2002.

***Career Opportunities in Theater and the Performing Arts***, by Shelly Field, 1999.

***Career Opportunities in Television, Cable, Video, and Multimedia (4th Ed)***, by Maxine K. Reed, et. al., 1999.

***Making A Living While Making A Difference: The Expanded Guide to Creating Careers with a Conscience***, by Melissa Everett, 1999.







### Learning About Careers From Other People

Now that you've done a little homework, start talking to people. Make a list of people who can give you advice about the career(s) you're considering. Start with people like professors, teachers, school counselors, friends, relatives, and employers. They may be able to recommend other people for you to talk to for advice.

### INFORMATIONAL *interviewing*

If you really want to get a sense of what a certain job is all about, try talking to someone who actually works in the occupation. This is called an **informational interview**. Not

only is this a great way to get first-hand information, but it can also help you make a contact in the field you're thinking of pursuing.

#### INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

Learn something about the person you're interviewing beforehand.

Learn as much as you can about your interviewee's organization.

Dress professionally.

Arrive 5 to 10 minutes early.

Come prepared with questions.

Be mindful of the interviewee's time.

Send a thank-you note.

What if you don't know anyone in the field you're researching? That's okay—you can use your own personal network to find contacts. Try asking friends, employers, teachers, acquaintances, and career counselors for contacts. You can also try to make contacts through professional groups, alumni associations, human resource professionals, or by simply looking through the telephone book. Calling someone you don't know can be a little daunting, but people are often flattered if you show interest in what they do.

If you contact your interviewee by phone, it's a good idea to write an outline of what you plan to say during your interview. Not only will this make you feel more confident, but it guarantees that you will ask all of your questions. Be sure to say right away where you got the person's name. Also say that you only need 20 to 30 minutes of their time. Then, keep your promise!

## **FACT FINDING:** *Where can I find information on careers?*

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### **Sample Questions for an Informational Interview**

When you go to an informational interview, treat it as you would any professional interview. Be prepared with lots of questions when you get there. To get you started, here are some questions you can ask someone who works in the career you're investigating:

- How did you decide to get into your field? Did you plan for your current job, or did it just happen?
- What type of education or training did you need to be qualified for the work you do?
- What is a typical day like for you?
- What is your work environment like?
- What do you like best about your chosen field? Least?
- What is a typical entry-level position in this field?
- What opportunities for advancement do people in your field have?
- What is the future of this field in terms of new and expanding opportunities?
- Are there alternative ways to enter this field (i.e., through volunteer work, part-time employment, or internships)?

Of course, you should add your own specific questions, too. However, remember to stay away from personal questions about pay or benefits. Some people might volunteer this information, but it's not a good idea to ask. If you want to learn about the pay for different occupations, you should seek out other sources of information, like the Louisiana Department of Labor or the Occupational Outlook Handbook.

After the interview, be sure to send a thank-you note to your interviewee. Not only is it a polite and professional way to let them know you appreciated their help, but it also serves as a reminder of who you are and how to get in touch with you. On the next page is an example of a thank-you letter for this type of occasion.

# FACT FINDING: *Where can I find information on careers?*

## Sample Thank-You Note for an Informational Interview

June 23, 2002

Ms. Melissa Boyd  
Systems Analyst  
ABC Company  
534 Parker Lane  
Baton Rouge, LA 70805

Dear Ms. Boyd,

Thank you very much for taking the time to meet with me last week to talk about your career. I am grateful for the information and advice you gave me—I now have a much better idea about exactly what systems analysts do. I also definitely plan to take your advice about enrolling in Professor Atkin's Cobol course this fall.

Again, thank you. I really appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Thomas Smith*

Thomas Smith  
4560 West Seashore Road, #4  
Baton Rouge, LA 70808  
Tsmith@email.com  
(225) 555-1234

Tom is very specific about how Melissa helped him.

Tom signed his name in black ink.

# LANDING A JOB: *What should I be doing now?*

Once you've explored your interests, researched your career options, and gotten the education or training you need, you're ready to begin your job hunt. For some people, this process is easy. If you're in a field with lots of openings, you might even find that employers will contact you! For the rest of us, though, landing a job takes a bit more time and energy. For most people, the process involves networking, writing a résumé and a cover letter, going on an interview, and negotiating a job offer.

## NETWORKING

Many people begin their job search by looking through the newspaper want ads. But did you know that only about one in five job openings is advertised? That means it's important to tap into the so-called hidden job market—jobs that aren't advertised in the newspaper, on the Internet, or with job placement agencies. Use your social network! Friends, relatives, and teachers can all be great people to start with. If you don't know anyone in your field, there are lots of other ways to find job leads. Look in the telephone book and visit your local one-stop/Job Center office, temporary or permanent employment agencies, or your school job placement offices. Another excellent way to find job leads is to attend a career fair (see the next page for more information on career fairs).

Networking also involves becoming familiar with businesses in your area that hire people with your skills. For some people, the opportunities might be

**You should be familiar  
with a company before  
you contact someone  
there about a job.**

unlimited. Almost all companies need secretaries, computer experts, and managers. On the other hand, some occupations are only found in a few settings.

Doctors and nurses mainly work in health care settings,

for example. If you have specialized skills or training, you'll need to do a little exploring to figure out where the job market is in your area. Research companies carefully. You should be familiar with a company before you contact someone there about a job. When considering different companies, think about the following questions: *What specific type of work does this company do? How large is the company? How many different branches does it have? What are this company's values and objectives?*

## WHAT ABOUT CAREER FAIRS?

Attending a career fair is a great way to get exposure to many employers and to develop your network of career contacts. It's also an opportunity to learn valuable information about many industries, corporations, and different job positions. Employers participate in career fairs to meet students and recruit employees. They'll give you general information about career options as well as specific information about current openings in their companies.

### WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO PREPARE?

- Review the list of employers before attending a career fair. Figure out which ones interest you the most, and go there first. It's also a good idea to determine where employers are located beforehand and in what order to visit them.
- Keep your focus broad—include many types of employers.
- Be organized! Bring plenty of copies of your résumé and a folder or portfolio to hold all your materials.
- Have a pen or pencil and paper available to take notes.
- Introduce yourself. Be prepared with a brief introductory sentence for each employer. They may ask you questions about yourself, so be prepared to treat your encounter like an interview. Tell them the type of position and career path you'd like to follow.
- Be aware of time demands on employers; don't monopolize an employer's time.
- Ask specific questions about the organization and career opportunities.
- Offer to follow up after the fair.
- Ask for employers' business cards for follow-up discussions and correspondence.

# LANDING A JOB: *What should I be doing now?*

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## PREPARING A RÉSUMÉ

If you're planning on job-hunting, you will almost certainly need a résumé. A résumé is just a written summary of what you have to offer to your potential employer—your education, work experience, and special skills. You should prepare a résumé **before** you make contact with a potential employer, so you have one ready to give if you're asked.

A résumé should be designed to achieve one goal: *to motivate an employer to invite you to an interview*. And once you're invited to an interview with an employer, your résumé should serve as a guide for both of you while you're discussing your qualifications and skills. To be successful, your résumé should be an organized, complete, clear, and accurate description of your life in the world of work.

### Parts of a Résumé

Although there are lots of different résumé styles to choose from, every résumé has certain basic components. Your résumé should provide answers to these questions:

- **CONTACT INFORMATION—WHO ARE YOU AND HOW CAN YOU BE REACHED?**

Include your name, address, phone number, and email address if you have one. If you're a student away from home, you should include both your school address and a permanent address so employers can reach you easily.

- **OBJECTIVE—WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?**

Including a "job objective" or "career goal" is optional, but it can be a good way to show the employer where you want to go in your career and the type of position you're looking for now. If you're looking for jobs in a number of different fields, you should have a different job objective for each position. Don't write an objective that's vague—if you can't write something specific, don't include one. Your job objective may include (1) the level of position you're looking for—such as entry level, internship, supervisory, or executive; (2) the skills you hope to bring to the position; (3) the actual title of the job you're applying for; and (4) the field or industry in which you hope to work—such as health care, education, or banking.

# LANDING A JOB: *What should I be doing now?*

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- **EDUCATION—WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?**

In this section, you should include any information about your degree(s), including when and where you graduated; your major, minor, or concentration; and any academic awards or honors you've earned. Make sure you use the official names for schools, degrees, and majors/minors.

- **EXPERIENCE—WHAT HAVE YOU DONE AND WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

The way you structure your "experience" section will depend on what you're looking for and what you've done. This section lists the positions you've held,

## **GPA: TO INCLUDE OR NOT TO INCLUDE?**

You aren't required to include your GPA on your résumé, but a general rule of thumb is that if your GPA is 3.0 or above, include it.

Remember, your GPA should appear just as it does on your transcript.

names and locations of employers, and dates you were employed. Include any volunteer work or independent study that you've done if it's relevant to the job you're seeking. You should list responsibilities and achievements for each position you've held. In some instances, you may want to divide your experience into sub-sections. For example, if you're seeking a teaching job, and you have had both a teaching and a business background, two separate headings—"Teaching Experience" and "Additional Experience" may have more impact than a single heading. Try to describe your experience in the most brief and interesting way possible. However, don't

sacrifice important details just to be brief. Be hard on yourself, and if necessary, discard "good" material that won't have any meaning to an employer.

Descriptions don't need to be phrased in complete sentences. For example, instead of writing "My responsibilities included serving customers," you can write "served customers." Remember, the question in the employer's mind is "Why should I speak with this person? How is this person different from all the other applicants?" Try to answer those questions in each of your descriptions.

# LANDING A JOB: *What should I be doing now?*

## TIPS FOR WRITING RÉSUMÉS

- **USE PROPER GRAMMAR AND SPELLING.** Double-check and triple-check your résumé for spelling and grammatical errors. Even if you're perfect for a job, small mistakes can make you look careless. Just one mistake could hurt your chances for a job.
- **WRITE CLEARLY AND CONCISELY.** Use simple terms to describe your experience and skills. Stay away from jargon that wouldn't mean anything to a potential employer.
- **BE SPECIFIC.** Instead of writing, "I have good computer skills," be more specific: "I have had over four years of experience with Microsoft Word, Excel, and Access." The second sentence gets the same point across, but shows the employer exactly what you can do.
- **BE PROFESSIONAL.** Don't include personal information or pictures, or discuss age, sex, weight, or height unless it is relevant to the job requirements. Don't put your résumé in a fancy binder or folder.
- **MAKE YOUR RÉSUMÉ PLEASING TO THE EYE.** Don't try to cram too much information on one page. Use ordinary font and high quality résumé paper (it's sold at office supply stores for less than \$10.00). Your paper should be a soft color such as off-white or light gray—avoid bright colors like orange or green. Print your résumé on a high-quality printer, and don't send photocopies of your résumé.
- **THE ONE-PAGE RULE.** Your résumé should go over one page only if absolutely necessary. Don't include "fluff" or extra information—especially if it means you'll go over one page.
- **INCLUDE YOUR REFERENCES ON A SEPARATE SHEET OF PAPER.** Never include your references right on your résumé, but always have a list of references ready to provide a prospective employer. Be sure to ask your references for permission before giving out their names!
- **KEEP YOUR AUDIENCE IN MIND.** It's perfectly fine to customize your résumé for each job for which you apply. You may have had a variety of different types of work experience—try to emphasize the right skills when you send out a résumé.



## Résumé Formats

**1. CHRONOLOGICAL RÉSUMÉ.** This type of résumé is organized around your work history, with your most recent job listed first. Chronological is the traditional format, and some employers prefer this type since it's so predictable and easy to read. However, because it emphasizes previous experience, it works best for people who have been working for a while. It's not always the best choice for students, or for people who are thinking of changing careers and have little experience in their new field.

**2. FUNCTIONAL RÉSUMÉ.** This type of résumé emphasizes skills and abilities more than work experience. You'll still need to list your employment history, but a functional résumé allows you to highlight your skills and specific accomplishments rather than just where you've worked. This is a good format for students, career-changers, and people who have gaps in their employment history.

**3. COMBINATION RÉSUMÉ.** A combination résumé is a mix of the chronological and functional résumé styles. If you have some relevant experience, but also wish to emphasize particular skills and abilities that you have, this might be a good style for you.

### Cyber Résumés!

Did you know that you can post your résumé on-line? Today, many progressive job seekers and employers are using the Internet to hook up. Most job search web sites, like [www.LAWORKS.net](http://www.LAWORKS.net) and America's Job Bank, make it easy for you to build your résumé and publish it on the Internet. In fact, many web sites have résumé-builders that walk you through the process. All the traditional rules for résumé-writing still apply. In general, if you're going to distribute your résumé electronically, you can create either a **plain text** or a **hypertext** résumé.

**Plain text résumés** are appropriate if you're sending your résumé to someone via e-mail. The advantage of plain text formats are that they can be read by almost any type of computer program. The disadvantage is that you can't use fancy formatting, like bold or italics.

**Hypertext résumés** take advantage of the features of the Internet. They may include graphics, videos, sound, hypertext links and direct e-mail.

On the next few pages, you'll find examples of chronological and functional résumés. These examples should help you to see that not only are different formats okay, but lots of different styles are okay, too.

# LANDING A JOB: *What should I be doing now?*

## COMBINATION RÉSUMÉ EXAMPLE

Lauren begins by listing her special skills and experience, but also includes a detailed work and volunteer history section below. Notice that although Lauren has little paid work experience, she highlights her relevant volunteer experience.

**LAUREN GREEN**  
208 South Ashton Street  
New Orleans, LA 70183  
Home: (504) 555-5555  
email: Laurens\_email@yahoo.com

### Objective

To obtain an entry-level research position in a non-profit housing development organization.

### Education

2001: M.S. Economics, Louisiana State University, GPA: 3.88  
1998: B.A. Economics and Psychology, Tulane University, GPA: 3.56

### Relevant Non-Profit Skills and Experience

- Over two years of experience conducting research for a non-profit agency
- Helped organize an urban Limited Equity Housing Co-op convention for a non-profit agency
- Co-chaired the Louisiana Task Force for Hunger Outreach

### Project Management Skills

- Extensive experience with database management software, including Access and FoxPro
- Designed and implemented a plan for long-term social planning for a residential community of 60
- Extensive experience in writing grant applications and research reports

### Relevant Work and Volunteer Experience

- 1997-2001** **Research Assistant** for the Department of Economics, Louisiana State University. Managed research projects focusing on the Fair Housing Act, economic development, and urban renewal initiatives.
- 1993-1996** **Co-Chair** for the Louisiana Task Force for Hunger Outreach (Volunteer Position). Coordinated the activities of over 15 volunteers, organized can food drives, prepared community outreach activities and helped to staff local food pantry
- 1993-1994** **Researcher** for Louisiana Home Network (Volunteer Position). Researched local housing prices and prepared a special report for a local task force on affordable housing.

### References Available Upon Request

# LANDING A JOB: *What should I be doing now?*

Darlene's chronological résumé highlights her previous work experience in the traditional format.

## CHRONOLOGICAL RÉSUMÉ EXAMPLE

### DARLENE MILLS

404 West 3<sup>rd</sup> Street • Phoenix, AZ 39468 • (217) 555-5555 • Darlenes\_email@yahoo.com

#### PROFESSIONAL OBJECTIVE

To obtain a paralegal position requiring expertise in employment law.

#### WORK EXPERIENCE

**May, 1998 to Present: Paralegal for Basche and Stevens, Attorneys at Law, Phoenix, Arizona**

Perform legal research, focusing primarily on employment law.  
Summarize depositions and legal documents, and prepare and manage databases for attorneys.

**March, 1996 to May, 1998: Office Manager/Legal Secretary for Law, Inc., Phoenix, Arizona**

Drafted legal correspondence, managed intake interviews, scheduled depositions, performed minor legal research, and performed clerical work such as typing, filing, mailing, and dealing with clients on the telephone.

**March, 1995 to March, 1996: Receptionist for Pinewood Apartment Complex, Phoenix, Arizona**

Drafted correspondence, managed leasing database, scheduled site visits and maintenance checks with residents, performed clerical work, and ran errands.

**January, 1994 to March, 1995: Hostess for Baker's Square Restaurant, Phoenix, Arizona**

Performed a variety of tasks, including greeting and seating customers, waiting on tables, and serving food when needed; cashiering; bussing tables; and generally attending to customers' needs.

#### EDUCATION

**December, 1998:** Certificate in Paralegal Studies, Arizona State University

**December, 1996:** B.A., Philosophy, with a minor in Spanish, Arizona State University

#### PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

**1998-Present:** National Association of Paralegal Associates

**1997-1998:** Alpha Beta Gamma International Honor Society

#### REFERENCES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

# LANDING A JOB: *What should I be doing now?*

## FUNCTIONAL RÉSUMÉ EXAMPLE

### Nicholas Freedman

4428 Main Street Minneapolis, Minnesota 55655 (612)555-5555 NicksEmail@aol.com

### Highlights

Expertise in desktop publishing, graphic arts, and Web design techniques  
Excellent customer service and communications skills  
Proficient in a variety of graphic design software and computer languages

### Relevant Skills and Experience

#### Graphic Design Skills

Proficient in HTML, DHTML, Java, and JavaScript  
Experienced with Quark, Adobe Illustrator, Adobe PhotoShop, and Adobe Premier  
Skilled at Web page design and creation for a variety of different organizations  
Experienced in designing and producing graphic-intensive brochures, pamphlets, flyers, and short publications

#### Customer Service Skills

Experience dealing one-on-one with customers and clients  
Able to communicate effectively to understand exactly what a client needs  
Have improved customer service by designing Web-based customer satisfaction surveys  
Experience speaking to large audiences

#### Computer Skills

Proficient in MS Word, PowerPoint, and Excel  
Familiar with both Macintosh and Windows Operating Systems  
Willing and able to learn new programs  
Internet-savvy

### Work Experience

May 1997-Present:	Secretary, Third Presbyterian Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota.
March, 1998-Present:	Volunteer, Homes for Families, Minneapolis Chapter
June, 1995-May 1997:	Cashier, Tom Thumb Grocery Store, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

### Education

Bachelor of Arts, Graphic Design, August 2000, University of Minnesota

**References** Available Upon Request

Nicholas' résumé focuses almost completely on his skills, but he also includes a short work history section.

# LANDING A JOB: *What should I be doing now?*

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## THE COVER LETTER

A cover letter is a brief letter that you include with your résumé any time you send it to a prospective employer. In most situations, your cover letter will be your first contact with an employer, addressed to a specific individual and closed with your signature. This is your chance to really shine—to let your prospective employer know why you’re the best person for the job. Remember, unlike your résumé, your cover letter should be different for each employer. Don’t send out a “form letter.” A customized letter lets the employer know that you’re really interested in *that* job, at *that* company!

### Parts of a Cover Letter

#### INTRODUCTION—WHO ARE YOU AND WHY ARE YOU WRITING?

Introduce yourself and say why you are writing to the employer. Answer the reader’s question: “Why am I reading this letter?” Name the position or field you’re interested in, how you learned of the opening or organization, and, if appropriate, who referred you. In a sentence or two, explain what skills make you the best candidate for the position.

#### BODY—HOW DO YOUR SKILLS MATCH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE POSITION?

In one or two succinct paragraphs, match your background to the experience and skill requirements of the job. It’s best to summarize your qualifications and give specific examples. You shouldn’t repeat what is stated in your résumé; instead, expand on your experience that relates to the job and the employer. Also, identify any transferable skills, strengths, accomplishments, and results.



#### CLOSING—WHAT’S NEXT?

This paragraph should be brief. Simply summarize the letter, and indicate that you’ve enclosed your résumé. End the letter with an active statement, such as an offer to contact the employer within a specific period of time, usually one to two weeks. Always confirm how the employer may reach you. Close the letter by thanking the reader for his or her time and consideration, and don’t forget to sign.

# LANDING A JOB: *What should I be doing now?*

## TIPS FOR WRITING COVER LETTERS

- **ADDRESS YOUR COVER LETTER TO A REAL PERSON.** Don't use the phrase *To Whom it May Concern*. Address your letter to the person in charge of interviewing or hiring. If you're not sure who that is, try to find out before responding to the ad.
- **SHOW THEM YOU'RE INTERESTED!** Let them see that you've done your homework and that you know something about the company.
- **INCLUDE INFORMATION RELEVANT TO THE JOB YOU'RE SEEKING.** Show them that you've thought about how your skills and abilities match their needs.
- **DON'T JUST DESCRIBE YOUR BACKGROUND**—your résumé takes care of that. Bring your résumé to life by highlighting one or two of your most important skills or abilities.
- **WRITE IN CLEAR, CONCISE SENTENCES.** Keep your average sentence from 10 to 20 words, and keep paragraphs to under five lines. It's best to include no more than four paragraphs.
- **ORGANIZE YOUR INFORMATION FOR THE READER.** Group similar items together in paragraphs and relate them to each other logically. Don't lump unrelated topics together.
- **BE BRIEF.** This shows you understand the value of the reader's time.
- **BE PERSONABLE, BUT PROFESSIONAL.** Stay away from slang or jargon.
- **MAKE SURE YOUR COVER LETTER IS PLEASING TO THE EYE.** Be sure that you use the same paper for both your résumé and cover letter. Use high quality paper, and never send a photocopy of a résumé or a cover letter.
- **TYPE!** Except for your signature, your cover letter must be typed. And don't forget to sign.

# LANDING A JOB: *What should I be doing now?*

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## SAMPLE COVER LETTER #1

July 8, 2002

Mr. Ronald R. Young, President  
Desktop Publishing, Incorporated  
19 East 47<sup>th</sup> Street  
Miami, Florida 53041

Dear Mr. Young,

Cheryl Miller, your Graphic Design Supervisor, recently told me that you will soon have an opening for a Graphic Designer at Desktop Publishing, Inc. I am enclosing my résumé for your consideration.

I will graduate next month from the University of Minnesota with a bachelor's degree in graphic design. My training has primarily focused on Web-based design, which seems to fit quite well with Desktop Publishing's goals for expanding in that area. In addition, I have had extensive practical experience which I think would benefit Desktop Publishing, Inc. During my three years as secretary for Third Presbyterian Church of Minneapolis, and in my volunteer work at the Minneapolis Chapter of Homes for Families, I took it upon myself to create a Web site for both agencies, [www.ThirdPresby.org](http://www.ThirdPresby.org) and [www.HforFMN.org](http://www.HforFMN.org). These experiences taught me the importance of listening carefully to clients in order to understand their organizations' needs. Since I know that Desktop Publishing, Inc. has a strong customer focus, I think this skill would be an important asset to your company.

I would very much like to meet with you to discuss further how I might contribute to Desktop Publishing. I will call you next week to set up an interview. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Nicholas Freedman*

Nicholas Freedman  
4428 Main St., Apartment 5  
Minneapolis, MN 55655

# LANDING A JOB: *What should I be doing now?*

## SAMPLE COVER LETTER #2

### Internet Ad:

The Fair Housing Cooperative (FHC), a New Orleans-based nonprofit company, is seeking a Project Coordinator to work in its Urban Development Office. Duties will include basic research and neighborhood outreach. Excellent communication skills needed. Experience with quantitative research methods needed, and knowledge of HUD databases helpful. Please send résumé and cover letter to: Dr. Celeste Madden, Senior Project Manager, Fair Housing Cooperative.

September 27, 2002

Dr. Celeste Madden, Senior Project Manager  
Fair Housing Cooperative  
2453 East Fourth Street  
New Orleans, LA 70182

Dear Dr. Madden,

I was pleased to see an opening for a Project Coordinator posted on the Fair Housing Cooperative Web site. I believe my skills and abilities make me a strong candidate for the position. Enclosed please find my résumé for your consideration.

My educational background matches quite well with the requirements of the position. I recently graduated from LSU with an M.S. degree in economics. Using both quantitative and qualitative research methods, my master's thesis focused on urban housing projects in inner cities—an issue I know is central to the work of FHC. I used data from the national HUD database, so I am very familiar with this tool and would be eager to apply my expertise at FHC. As is outlined on my résumé, I also have held a number of volunteer positions which have given me insight and experience above and beyond my academic training. Through my work in these positions, I gained many new insights about factors that increase the success of non-profits.

I would be happy to arrange an interview to discuss my qualifications further. Should you have any questions, please contact me at (504) 555-5555. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

*Lauren Green*

Lauren Green  
208 South Ashton Street  
New Orleans, LA 70182



# LANDING A JOB: *What should I be doing now?*

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## SAMPLE COVER LETTER #3

November 12, 2002

Ms. Maya Hinckley, Attorney at Law  
Hinckley and Associates Law Firm  
256 North River Road  
Phoenix, AZ 39468

Dear Ms. Hinckley,

I am writing to apply for the senior paralegal position I saw advertised in the *Phoenix Sun Times* yesterday. Enclosed please find my résumé and transcripts from my paralegal courses, as requested in the advertisement.

I would be very pleased to have the opportunity to work for Hinckley and Associates. I know that your firm specializes in employment law. I have had over two years of experience in employment law, and I am eager to continue working in this area. I have experience with MS Access and WestLaw, and am quick to learn new computer software. My cumulative five years of legal experience has taught me the importance of attention to detail. If given the opportunity to work for your firm, I think you will find me a reliable, pleasant, and careful worker.

I would be pleased to meet with you at your convenience to discuss my qualifications further. My telephone number is (217) 555-5555, and I can also be reached at Darlenes\_email@yahoo.com. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

*Darlene Mills*

Darlene Mills  
403 West 3<sup>rd</sup> Street  
Phoenix, Arizona 39468

## APPLICATION FORMS

For some jobs, you'll be expected to fill out an application—either instead of a résumé or in addition to one. Employers like using applications because it allows them to scan your qualifications quickly. A poorly completed application form may eliminate you from consideration for a job, even if you are the most qualified applicant. When filling out application forms, be sure to keep the following in mind:

- Come prepared. If you can't fill out the application at home, be sure to bring with you all relevant information, such as phone numbers and addresses of past employers and references, graduation dates and course information, and personal information like your social security or driver's license number.
- If you can, fill out applications at home. This will give you time to prepare your answers.
- Read the entire application before you begin writing any information.
- If possible, use a typewriter or computer. If not, use black ink and print very neatly. Don't let the form get dirty.
- Complete every question on the form. If some questions do not apply to you, draw a dash through the space or write "does not apply" ( or N/A for "not applicable").
- In the employment section of the application, don't forget to include part-time jobs like babysitting and mowing lawns if you don't have other extensive experience.

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**Come prepared.  
If you can't fill  
out the  
application at  
home, be sure to  
bring with you all  
relevant  
information.**

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# LANDING A JOB: *What should I be doing now?*

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- When stating your reason for leaving your recent job, be careful with your wording—don't say anything negative about yourself or a former employer.
- Many application forms ask what salary you expect. The best answer is usually "negotiable" or "will discuss."
- You can always attach an additional sheet of paper if the application form doesn't give you enough room to answer questions. For example, applications often ask if you've ever been convicted of a crime. If the answer is "yes," you should try to explain this in as much detail as possible, emphasizing the positive—like what you've learned from your previous mistake.

You can give a potential employer a copy of your résumé along with an application. It shows you're interested, and may set you apart from other applicants.

# LANDING A JOB: *What should I be doing now?*

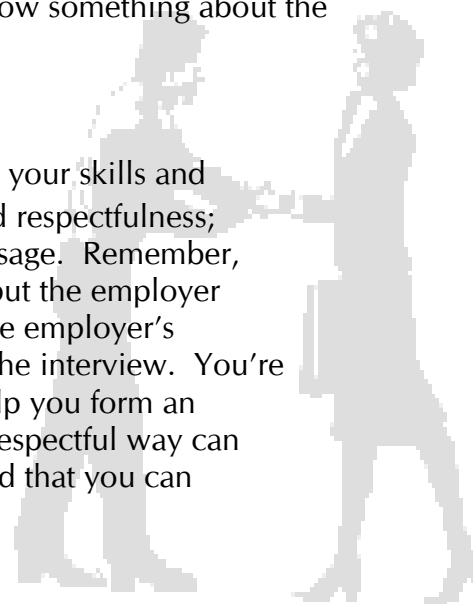
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## INTERVIEWING

Without a doubt, interviewing can be the scariest part of finding the right job. Take heart: if you're fortunate enough to have been asked to an interview, then you must be doing something right! It's okay to get nervous for an interview—most people do. There are several things that you can do to prepare that will make you feel a lot less nervous when you get there.

### BEFORE *the* interview

- 1 RESEARCH** the company by reading any publications, articles, or brochures it publishes. Check out the company's Web site to learn as much as you can about its organization and goals. The more you know about the company, the better prepared you are to make a decision about whether or not you'd like to work there. And the employer will be impressed if you show you know something about the company.
- 2 THINK** ahead of time about how you want to talk about your skills and abilities. Try to strike a balance between confidence and respectfulness; going too far in either direction can send the wrong message. Remember, interviewing is a two-way street. Yes, you need a job—but the employer needs to fill a job. You should be prepared to answer the employer's questions, but you don't have to be passive throughout the interview. You're entitled to ask questions and bring up topics that will help you form an opinion of the organization and the job. Doing so in a respectful way can show the employer that you're a good communicator and that you can contribute to the conversation.
- 3 ARRIVE** 5-10 minutes early for the interview. If you're not familiar with the physical location where your interview will take place, visit the building beforehand. If that's not possible, be sure to get a good set of directions. You should be able to get directions from the employer's telephone receptionist.



# LANDING A JOB: *What should I be doing now?*

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**4 DRESS** for success. Like it or not, first impressions are important. As a general rule, it's best to dress just slightly better for the interview than you would for the job for which you're interviewing. If you're interviewing for a professional position, wear a business suit. Avoid flashy clothes, and don't wear too much cologne—your scent shouldn't linger after you've left the room. It's also important that you feel comfortable, so if you think the work environment is very informal, call ahead and ask.

**5 CONSIDER** bringing work samples with you to an interview. When employers look at your résumé, they can only read what you say you can do—they can't see for themselves. Samples of things you've written, designed, built, photographed, or created can give the employer a more concrete idea of what you have to offer. Pick out a few samples of things that you are most proud of. Some ideas include:

- A paper, story, or article that won an award.
- A class project on which you did well.
- A brochure, newsletter, or Web site you designed.
- A letter of praise from a former employer, client, or patient.
- A photograph of furniture you made or a building you helped build.
- A news article that highlights one of your activities or accomplishments.

Use discretion when you bring samples. Unless you know you're expected to bring samples to an interview, it's a good idea to get permission from the employer first. Try not to bring samples that are large or unwieldy. If your work samples are the property of your previous employer, or if sharing them invades someone's privacy, get permission first, or don't share them at all. Sharing potentially sensitive material might suggest to the employer that you aren't careful, or worse—that you can't be trusted.

# LANDING A JOB: *What should I be doing now?*

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**6** **THE INTERVIEW** begins when you walk in the door. Be courteous and polite to everyone you encounter after you get to the office. Remember, people communicate with each other. If you behave one way toward a receptionist and another toward your potential employer, you may be seen as insincere.

**7** **COME** organized and prepared. When you go to an interview, always bring with you:

- Several extra copies of your résumé.
- Contact information for your references.
- Paper and pen to take notes.
- Your work samples (if applicable).
- A list of questions to ask the employer.

**8** **IF** you're asked to wait for your interviewer in a reception area, don't read magazines or newspapers or "get too comfortable." Take note of your surroundings and look for points of interest, such as company product displays, that you could discuss with the employer.

## DURING *the* interview

You may have several interviews with a single employer before receiving a job offer. You might first have a short "screening interview" during which the employer asks questions about you and describes the organization and the position. If the screening interview goes well, the employer may invite you to a second (and perhaps third or fourth) interview. The second interview generally lasts anywhere from two hours to a whole day. It could include a variety of questions, some form of testing, lunch or dinner, or a tour. You should come away from the second interview with a thorough understanding of the job responsibilities and the organization's culture and environment. At this point, you should have enough information to be able to make a decision if you receive a job offer.

# LANDING A JOB: *What should I be doing now?*

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## The Structure of an Interview

### THE WARM-UP



During the first few minutes of the interview, an employer will be forming a first—and lasting—impression of you. The way you greet the employer, the firmness of your handshake, and the way you are dressed will all be a part of this initial impression. An interviewer may begin by asking common-ground questions about shared interests, the weather, or your travel to the interview. Some interviewers might start by saying, “Tell me about yourself.” This is an opening for you to **briefly** describe your background, skills, and interest in the position. Remember, a question like this isn’t an invitation for you to go on about yourself for 30 minutes. You’ll be able to share more about yourself as the interview goes on.

The information exchange is the primary part of the interview. This is when you’ll be asked most of the questions and learn most about the employer. Interview questions may range from “Why did you choose to pursue a business degree?” to “What are your strengths/weaknesses?” and “What are your long-range career plans?” If you’re prepared for the interview, you’ll be able to emphasize your qualifications effectively as you respond to each question. Below is a set of potential questions that the employer might ask you. You should consider your answers to some or all of these questions before you go to the interview.

### THE INFORMATION EXCHANGE



#### Questions about You

- Tell me (us) about yourself.
- How do you think a friend would describe you?
- What do you think is your greatest strength?
- What do you think is your greatest weakness?
- Can you summarize the contribution you would make to our organization?

# LANDING A JOB: *What should I be doing now?*

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- Tell me about the greatest professional assignment you've ever handled.
- Why are you the best candidate for this position?
- Have you ever supervised anyone?

## **Questions about How Well You Fit with the Job and the Organization**

- Why are you interested in this job?
- What do you know about us?
- In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable?
- How do you work under pressure?
- How do you handle conflict?
- What work-related problems have you encountered?
- How competitive are you?

## **Questions about Your Career and Personal Choices**

- What are your long-range career goals? When and why did you establish these goals, and how are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
- What are the most important rewards you expect in your business career?
- What do you do in your spare time?
- What kind of salary are you looking for?
- Are you willing to relocate?

## **Tough questions**

- Did you ever have a boss you disliked? Why did you dislike him or her?
- What would you say are your weaknesses?
- Tell me about a time you experienced a failure and how you handled it.
- Tell me about a time when you were under pressure to meet a goal.
- Describe a situation where you had to resolve a problem at work.
- If you could have any job in the world, what would it be?
- What motivates you?
- Why do you want to work for us and not our competitor?
- Why should we hire you over someone else?
- What did you like or dislike about your last job?
- What would you like to be doing five years from now?
- Why are you leaving your current job?



# LANDING A JOB: *What should I be doing now?*

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## Inappropriate Questions

Some questions are inappropriate or even illegal for the employer to ask. Most questions about your personal life, such as your marital status, age, or racial background, are inappropriate. Questions like this put the interviewee in a tough position. You may refuse to answer such questions, but this could embarrass the employer. (He/she may not even be aware that the question is illegal.) Your best defense is simply to be prepared for how you want to handle inappropriate questions, should they arise. Some other examples of such questions include:

- Have you ever been married/divorced?
- Do you plan to take time off to raise children?
- What does your spouse think about relocating to this area?

### THE WRAP-UP



Eventually, the employer will probably say, “Do you have any questions?” This is your cue that the interview is moving to the wrap-up stage. Always ask questions. This demonstrates your interest in the job. To the right are some sample questions you might ask, but don’t rely on those examples. Your questions should indicate that you’ve been listening to the employer. If possible, follow up on a particular subject that you talked about earlier in the interview. **Don’t ask questions**

**about salary or benefits during your first interview unless the employer broaches the subject first.**

At the end of the interview, the employer might ask you if you have anything to add or say. Again, it’s best to have a response. You can use the opportunity to thank the employer for the interview and reiterate your interest in the position. If you want to add information or emphasize a point you made earlier, you can do that, too. This last impression is almost as important as the first impression, and it will add to the substance discussed during the information exchange.

## Sample Questions to Ask An Employer

*What would a typical day in this job be like?*

*Could you describe a typical first assignment?*

*Who would I work most closely with on a day-to-day basis?*

*What are the most challenging aspects of the position?*

*Why is this position open?*

*How is success in this position measured?*

*What sorts of tasks would I be expected to accomplish within the first six months on this job?*

*How do employees in this organization keep current with developments in the field?*

# LANDING A JOB: *What should I be doing now?*

## TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWING

- **CONNECT WITH THE INTERVIEWER(S).** There may be more than one person at the interview. When you are introduced, shake hands, smile, make direct eye contact, and say each person's name.
- **LISTEN VERY CAREFULLY.** Listening to what the interviewer is saying is not only polite, but it will also help you to respond in the appropriate way. You can pick up certain cues about how you should behave: if the interviewer is formal, then you should be, too. If the interviewer is more casual, then you can relax a little bit. You should also listen to learn as much about the position as you can.
- **TAKE SOME NOTES.** While you shouldn't write down everything the employer says, it's okay to take a few notes here and there during the interview. It shows you're attentive and that you want to remember what the employer says. It also can create a natural pause in the conversation, which helps you to think and remain poised.
- **BE POISED.** Pay attention to nonverbal behavior. Look the interviewer in the eye, sit up straight with both feet on the floor, control nervous habits, and don't giggle or play with your hair.
- **DON'T BE AFRAID OF SHORT PAUSES.** You may need a few moments to formulate an answer to a question, and the interviewer may need to formulate an appropriate question. It's not necessary to fill up every second with conversation.
- **BE POSITIVE.** Never say anything negative about a previous employer or co-worker. You may be looking for a new job because you are having trouble with your current employer, you were fired, or some other unfortunate reason. Try to put as positive a spin on this as possible during your interview. If you have had negative work experiences, emphasize what you've learned from them.

# LANDING A JOB: What should I be doing now?

## AFTER *the* interview

### Following up with the Employer

#### TIPS FOR WRITING THANK-YOU LETTERS

*If you were interviewed by more than one person, send a thank-you letter to the key hiring decision-maker and to the person who coordinated the interview process.*

*Personalize each letter, since the recipients are likely to discuss your candidacy together. In your letter, mention the names of those you met.*

*Type—don't print—your letter on plain white or light-colored stationery. E-mail is often okay, too, but you must still observe rules of grammar, punctuation, and spelling!*

*Although this is still a business letter, it may be more personal in tone.*

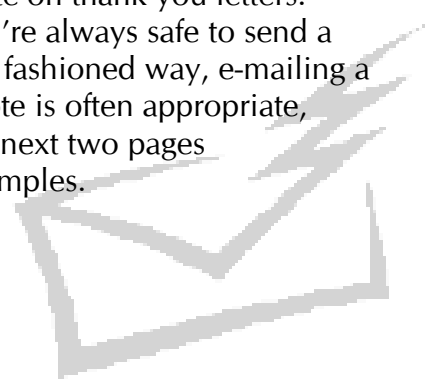
*Mention the date you spoke with the person, and highlight a particularly useful piece of information you received or gave.*

*Keep your letter brief. Three short paragraphs are usually enough.*

*Provide any information the employer may have requested during the interview.*

*Be sure to express a cordial greeting and expression of thanks for interviewing you.*

In all cases—no matter how you feel immediately following an interview—it's important for you to follow up with the employer. Unless you receive a job offer after a first interview (which is practically unheard of), you'll probably experience some degree of post-interview letdown. Even when an interview goes well, most of us still experience this. But there's good news. If you decide to concentrate on sending a thank-you note right after an interview, your feelings of let-down will probably disappear more quickly. Why? Sending a thank-you letter will give you the chance to communicate anything you may have forgotten to say during the interview. It can also give you closure, at least for the immediate future, until you hear from the employer again. And whether or not you're offered a job, sending a thank-you letter is considerate; the employer will appreciate the gesture. One final note on thank-you letters: although you're always safe to send a letter the old fashioned way, e-mailing a thank-you note is often appropriate, too. See the next two pages for some examples.



# LANDING A JOB: *What should I be doing now?*

## Sample “Thank-You for an Interview” Letter

May 26, 2002

Ms. Leda Frank  
Manager, Database Administration  
ABC Company  
6987 Magnolia Avenue  
Baton Rouge, LA 70805

Holly addresses the letter to Leda Frank, but also mentions her other interviewer—Mr. Lopez—by name in the letter.

Dear Ms. Frank,

I very much enjoyed meeting with you and Mr. Lopez today to discuss the possibility of my working for ABC company. I was extremely impressed with the company and very interested in your ideas for reorganizing the database administration team. As we discussed in the interview, I believe my experience with several different types of database management software would serve your needs well, particularly during the transition period.

Again, thank you for considering me. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

*Holly McDaniels*

Holly McDaniels  
567 W. Cretin Rd., #4  
Baton Rouge, LA 70808  
(225) 555-7869

# LANDING A JOB: *What should I be doing now?*

## Sample “Thank-You for an Interview” E-Mail

Hmcdaniels@yahoo.com on 5/26/2002 3:36pm

To:<Lfrank@ABCcompany.com>  
CC:  
Date:5/26/2002  
Attachments: McDaniels.dbf  
Subject: Thank You

Computer-generated text

Dear Ms. Frank,

Thank you for meeting with me today to discuss the possibility of my working for ABC Company. I really enjoyed meeting you and Mr. Lopez, and was very interested to hear your ideas for reorganizing the database administration team.

As you requested, I’m attaching a copy of the database sample we discussed during the interview. It is an Access for Windows 98 file.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Holly McDaniels  
567 W. Cretin Rd., #4  
Baton Rouge, LA 70808  
(225) 555-7869  
HMcDaniels@yahoo.com

Because she is using e-mail, Holly is able to attach an electronic file. She is careful to note the type of file format.

# LANDING A JOB: *What should I be doing now?*

## Negotiating a Job Offer

So, how do you respond to a job offer with anything other than excitement? In most cases, the proper response is cautious excitement because there are usually a few loose ends to wrap up. Remember, the best time to think about your response to a job offer is *before you actually receive the offer*.

Is negotiating a job offer risky? Although it may appear that the conditions of employment with a company are non-negotiable, this usually isn't true. In fact, most employers will expect you to attempt to negotiate at least a few of the fine points in their job offer. When a thoughtful and fair employer offers you a job, it means that s/he sees your value and wants you on board. Most of them are willing to compromise. And it's important to keep in mind that you, the job-seeker, aren't the only one with needs. The employer may need to fill the position as badly as you need a job!

Negotiation can carry risks, of course. There are right ways and wrong ways to negotiate. But being courteous and reasonable will go a long way towards getting you what you want.



### TIPS FOR NEGOTIATING SUCCESSFULLY

1. **Be prepared** for the negotiation phase before you receive the job offer. You should be able to articulate your needs and expectations, carefully listen to the employer's responses, and suggest compromises that would be agreeable to both of you. Know what your expectations are in terms of salary, and be ready to justify them to the employer.
2. **Be reasonable**, and look for ways to compromise while still getting some of what you want. For example, if you're looking for a starting salary of \$30,000 per year, but the employer can only offer you \$25,000, try to discuss such alternatives as (1) scheduled date and amount of your first increase; (2) bonus plans; (3) possible assistance for moving expenses; or (4) daycare assistance or other types of benefits, if applicable.
3. **Remember, this isn't personal**—it's *business*. As long as you're reasonable, cordial, and willing to compromise, you aren't going to make any enemies by negotiating. In fact, your prospective employer will likely respect you more for being able to communicate your expectations and work cooperatively to find mutually agreeable solutions.

# KEEPING A JOB: *What do I do now that I've been hired?*

Now that you've gotten over the big hurdle—getting hired—everything is easy, right? Well, maybe. Beginning a new job can require some big adjustments. You'll need to learn the ropes—what your boss and co-workers expect of you, what the company culture is like, and what to do if you have problems. Getting acclimated to a new job can be a challenge, and it's not unusual to take several months to a year before you really feel like you're a part of the team. This section of *Career Compass* provides some tips and strategies for easing the transition from job seeker to employee.

## THE FIRST DAY

On your first day at work, be sure to bring a notebook, pen, and all the paperwork and/or documentation you can think of that will be needed for human resource administrative purposes. This might include:

- Your social security card and driver's license, or other identification.
- Special certifications and licenses, if applicable.
- Family contact information, like telephone numbers and addresses.
- Form W-4 information (the number of dependents you wish to claim for tax withholding purposes).

Whether your new job is with a small firm or a large corporation, your employer will probably spend some time orienting you to your new workplace and co-workers. And although you may already know much of what you will hear during orientation, you should nevertheless carry your notebook and pen with you at all times so you can take notes if necessary. Even if you don't need to take notes, let that notebook and pen serve as reminders that you should be in a listening mode. Jot down any questions you may have, and pay special attention to the names, faces, and titles of people you meet or hear. Not having to ask about someone's name or title later will show your employer and co-workers that you are a good listener, willing to learn, and are interested in becoming part of the team.

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**On your first day,  
you should be in  
listening mode.**

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# KEEPING A JOB: *What do I do now that I've been hired?*

## THE COMPANY CULTURE

In the same way that first impressions were a deciding factor during the interview stage with your new employer, they will be important as you begin to build relationships with your new co-workers. One of your biggest challenges will be to adapt smoothly to the culture of your new workplace and, eventually, to enhance that culture by contributing your own unique qualities. In the same way that your new company culture will influence you, you will influence it.

It is very common to experience at least some degree of culture shock when you start a new job. It's okay to have some questions on the first day. In fact, if you're doing your job right, you may continue learning new things about your organization for months—even years.

### Getting Started with Teamwork

When starting a new job, it's natural to want to distinguish yourself as a good employee. It's always wise to behave professionally, courteously, and intelligently on the job, but

it's also smart to realize that you are part of a team. Your first goal should be to integrate smoothly into that team. This involves respecting leadership, working well with others, and performing responsibly.

If you succeed in fitting in well, at some point you will have the knowledge, experience, and familiarity needed to widen your focus. In some cases, this may occur in a matter of days or weeks; in others, years. But when that time arrives, you'll know that you're now a full member of the team and that your ideas will be heard. For example, when you first start a job, you may know a better way to perform specific tasks than those used by your new co-workers. The problem, of course, is that your team members don't know you yet, and will possibly see you as an opportunist rather than a team player. If you remain focused on the teamwork itself, however, your patience will eventually be rewarded, and you will have an audience for your ideas. And once your ideas have been heard and respected, you'll find that your horizons will quickly expand and give you the freedom to grow.

### QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF AS YOU BEGIN A NEW JOB

**Who is in charge, and how should I relate to them?**

**What, exactly, is the scope of my new job? What are my duties and responsibilities?**

**What is the overall structure of the department in which I work?**

**Who are my co-workers and superiors?**

**What are their names, and what are their roles in the organization?**



# KEEPING A JOB: *What do I do now that I've been hired?*

## IMPORTANT WORKPLACE ISSUES

In all likelihood, your employment situation will be pleasant and harmonious. However, you need to know that an employment relationship is not only economic and social—it is a **legal** relationship as well. Both you and your employer have rights and responsibilities. Answers to some frequently asked questions are provided below. General labor law information is also available on the Louisiana Department of Labor's Web site at [www.LAWWORKS.net](http://www.LAWWORKS.net) under Questions about....Labor Laws.

### What can I expect to be paid?

#### WHAT IS MINIMUM WAGE?

Under most circumstances, your employer may not pay you less than the minimum wage. The current federal minimum wage is **\$5.15/hour**. If your employer does more than \$500,000 in business in a year, or if your firm is involved in interstate commerce, or if you are employed with the federal, state, or local government, your employer *must* pay at least \$5.15/hour.

If you earn tips at your job, your employer must pay you at least \$2.13 per hour. If your tip total plus \$2.13 doesn't add up to \$5.15 or more, the employer must make up the difference.

However, if you are under 20 years old, your employer can pay \$4.25 for your first 90 consecutive calendar days of employment.

If you have additional questions about minimum wage, you may contact the U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour office toll-free at 1-866-4USWAGE (1-866-487-9243) between 8 am and 5 pm.

Your wage level will depend on lots of things, including how much education and experience you have and the type of work you do. The Louisiana Department of Labor publishes information on wages in over 500 occupations around the state. To find out the average wage level in your occupation and your area, you can go to the Louisiana Department of Labor Web site at [www.LAWWORKS.net](http://www.LAWWORKS.net) (then click on Labor Market Information/LOIS and "Occupations"). You can also call the Louisiana Department of Labor's Research and Statistics Office at **(225) 342-3141 or toll-free at (888)302-7662**.

If you work more than 40 hours per week, you are entitled to overtime pay of one and a half times the amount you usually make per hour. For example, if you normally make \$6.00 per hour, your overtime pay would be \$9.00 per hour. (Salaried employees, however, are often expected to work more than 40 hours per week without overtime pay.)

# KEEPING A JOB: *What do I do now that I've been hired?*

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## **Under what conditions can my employer fire me?**

Louisiana is an employment-at-will state, which means that an employer can legally hire, fire, suspend, or discipline an employee for almost any reason. However, there are some exceptions to this. An employer can't fire any employee who advises the employer that the business is in violation of a law, and the employee either discloses, threatens to disclose, or testifies about the violation of law. Also, the employer can't fire an employee for refusing to participate in an employment act that violates the law. An employer also cannot fire an employee for:

- Being called to military service.
- Political opinions or voting.
- Wage garnishment.
- Filing a worker's compensation claim.
- Being called to jury duty (Employer must also pay the employee one day's wages during the jury service).
- Contacting a labor union or voting to be represented by a union.

It is illegal for an employer to fire or discipline you for your political opinions or for filing a worker's compensation claim.

## **What about discrimination?**

An employer cannot legally discriminate because of sex, race, age, religion, national origin, or disability. This means that an employer cannot discriminate in any aspect of employment, including hiring, firing, and promotion; wages and benefits; employment tests; use of company facilities; training programs; and other conditions of employment on the basis of any of those characteristics. For example:

- An employer cannot make a decision to hire or fire someone because of that person's gender. Under almost all circumstances, an employer cannot make a hiring decision based on *assumptions* that members of one sex can perform a task better than the other.
- An employer cannot deny employment to someone on the basis of race—nor can they deny employment on the basis of affiliation with someone of another race.

## KEEPING A JOB: *What do I do now that I've been hired?*

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- An employer cannot pay different wages to two employees who perform substantially the same work, regardless of race, sex, religion, age, disability, or national origin.
- Pregnancy and other conditions related to childbirth must be treated the same as other short-term conditions.
- For both men and women, sexual harassment in the workplace is illegal. "Sexual harassment" includes a variety of behaviors ranging from directly propositioning someone to creating a work environment that is hostile.
- Employers cannot deny benefits to older workers on the basis of their age.

This doesn't cover all situations or circumstances. If you have a specific problem or question, you can contact the Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission national office (202) 663-4900 or the New Orleans field office at (504) 589-2329.

# **Customer Feedback** *questionnaire*

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Are you a (please circle):

Student? Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Counselor?

Career changer?

Other? (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

What section of the Career Compass is **most** helpful to you? Why?

What section of the Career Compass is **least** helpful to you? Why?

Additional comments or suggestions:

**Please cut out this page, and mail or fax it back to:**

**Career Compass Comments  
Louisiana Department of Labor  
Research & Statistics Division  
P.O. Box 94094  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804  
Fax: (225)342-9192**

*Thank you. We welcome your comments and suggestions.*